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11 December 1964

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Evaluation of the Defense Intelligency Agency  
With Respect to the Far East

1. Although sometimes commendable, DIA contributions and participation on FE estimates have often been poor. DIA's representatives usually lack a good knowledge of the areas on which they are working and sometimes lack experience in intelligence work. In fairness, these weaknesses are not to be easily overcome because of the diversity and difficulty of the intelligence problems encountered in work on the Far East. Furthermore, we emphasize that there are shining exceptions to this generalization, and we should also point out that our personal relationship with DIA people is almost always gratifyingly congenial.
2. As seen from our vantage point, DIA's work suffers from a bureaucratic dichotomy. The representatives with whom we deal come from the "Estimates" part of DIA, while most of the detailed research is done by the "Production" section. The "Estimates" representatives are often not familiar with the details of the facts and figures worked up by the Production

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section, and, moreover, seem loath to question or challenge the work done by their colleagues. In this connection, we have found that representatives of the individual services (ONE, ACSI, and AFCIN) are often able to make valuable contributions of information in their special fields.

3. A detailed evaluation of DIA's performance on Far East problems can probably best be presented under three main headings: China, Indochina, and the rest of the area.

A. China:

(1) DIA's competence on China has suffered from a lack of a sufficiently high claim on resources. Recently, more attention has been focused here and some progress has been made, but in our opinion, much remains to be done before it could be said that the best job possible is being done with available information.

(2) As far as we know, little fresh and imaginative analysis has been done on such broad topics as the Chinese Communists' strategic military doctrine and their long-range plans for development of China's military forces.

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(3) On the Chicom order of battle DIA claims a high level of confidence as to unit designation at the division level and above, but admits little is known about the actual (as opposed to formal) tables of organization and equipment or about the levels of combat readiness of various units. In this connection, DIA seems reluctant to describe and explain the methodology it uses in arriving at various OB estimates. While granting this would be a tediously complicated process, its importance is illustrated by the fact that, DIA's decision earlier this year to change its estimate of the size of the infantry division resulted in a decrease of 300,000 in the estimate of the manpower of the Chinese Communist Army. Intensive exploitation of photography holds promise of improving our knowledge in this important field, but so far only the surface has been scratched.

(4) For Estimates of the production of military equipment we quite frankly have to turn to ORR. DIA has continually served up estimates, many of which are dubious, some of which are demonstrably grossly in error.

(5) We are unable to judge DIA's competence on advanced weapons matters because whatever work they are doing in this field thus far came to us through inter-agency committees.

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B. Indochina

(1) Recently, papers produced on this crisis area have generally been crash projects with short deadlines where written contributions were infeasible. Hence the competence of two representatives has been of unusual importance. In this regard, DIA has a batting average of about .500.

(2) Despite private reservations, DIA representatives have been prone to accept without challenge the data and assessments of local military commanders. We have also detected a tendency on the part of DIA representatives to avoid assessments which might run counter to policies and decisions which they believe military planners and policymakers favor.

C. Elsewhere in the Far East.

(1) DIA's work on Malaysia/Indonesia/Philippines area has been weak. Contributions have been inadequate even on such "open" subjects as Commonwealth OB in the area. Contributions on such matters as Soviet military aid to Indonesia have had to be corrected and supplemented by ORR.

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(2) We are somewhat sceptical of the soundness of work on North Korean military matters, but this subject has not been recently given intensive study in national intelligence papers.

(3) Coverage of our military forces of South Korea and Nationalist China is very good on gross matters of OB, a little less satisfactory on matters of leadership, plans, and morale.

ONE/FE Staff

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